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NEW VARIETIES OF ALFALFA

Yellow-Flowered Species Found
Throughout Eurasia Seems to Be
Adapted to Cold and Drought.

Considerable interest has been aroused through the importation by the United States department of agriculture of some new, hardy varieties of alfalfa. Little, however, is generally known concerning the characteristics of these new alfalfas or the real purpose of their introduction.

In the search for hardy forms of common alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) adapted to severe conditions of drought and cold, the potential value of closely allied species became apparent. A yellow-flowered species (*Medicago falcata*) found widely distributed throughout Eurasia, forms of which thrive on the cold, dry steppes of Russia and similar regions, seemed to be the most promising. For this reason persistent efforts were made to import many valuable forms of this species.

Medicago falcata, previously called "Siberian alfalfa," and for which there is no satisfactory common name, is characterized in general by its drooping habit, narrow leaves and fine stems; but it is so variable that some plants may be readily mistaken for common alfalfa when not in flower. Very few of the forms possess true tap roots like the common alfalfa, but they have a branching root system by which new plants are produced. The flowers are yellow and the seed pods falcate or sickle shaped, hence its botanical name.

The department of agriculture has met with many difficulties in procuring seed in quantity, as it is not handled commercially and in no place is it produced in abundance. In spite of the scarcity of seed very thorough tests have been conducted, both under cultivation and on unbroken sod at the department's testing stations and in co-operative experiments at state stations. The results of these tests of the available forms of *Medicago falcata* indicate rather definitely that their chief value is for crossing with common alfalfa to produce hardy and drought-resistant hybrid strains. At present the new alfalfas do not appear to be sufficiently productive to make them generally profitable under cultivation. Many of the forms are unquestionably very hardy and drought-resistant and have already shown their

value as stock for crossing with varieties commonly known.

One of the hardest, if not the hardest, of our common strains, the Grimm alfalfa, probably originated through natural hybridization of *Medicago falcata* and common alfalfa. Grimm alfalfa is coming into very wide use in the northwestern states. The new alfalfas have not yet been tested on the open range as fully as under cultivation. Although the results to date indicate their inability to maintain themselves except under very favorable conditions, the tests are nevertheless being continued with the hope of ultimate success in improving the range.

The experts of the department do not believe that this yellow-flowered alfalfa in its unselected state is a crop for the farmer to test, even though seed were available. Three main considerations show that it is not likely to prove valuable under cultivation: (1) Most of its forms are not sufficiently erect to be easily harvested for hay; (2) It does not recover quickly after cutting and cannot be expected to give more than one cutting during the season; (3) Its seed habits are usually poor, the seed being scantily produced and shattering badly at maturity.

The department of agriculture is pushing the work of selection by hybridization of the best forms of this species as rapidly as possible, in the hope that valuable drought-resistant and cold-resistant strains may ultimately be established in general use.

A Journalist's "Copy."

The late Mr. Levy of the Daily Telegraph once asked Sala if he had any objection to his copy being edited in the office. "Mr. Levy," he replied, "I am like a butcher. I sell you so much meat—to me it is a matter of profound indifference whether you serve it fried, boiled or roasted."—Recollections of Mrs. T. P. O'Connor.

Diarrhea's Humor.

I was introduced by particular request to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a pretty little woman, a flirt and a rattle-tongued, gifted with a volubility I can convey no idea. She told me she was "silent, melancholy" and "overcast" that I had no doubt of the fact. Letter of Benjamin Disraeli to his

WEEDS REDUCE CROP YIELDS

Interesting and Instructive Experiment Conducted at North Dakota Agricultural College.

(By W. C. PALMER, Agricultural Station North Dakota Agricultural College.)

That weeds reduce yields is evident. To get some idea of how much weeds might reduce yields I selected a field that was weedy with pigeon grass, the wheat was ripe. I measured out a square yard at several places, pulled the weeds carefully so as not to disturb the wheat. The weight of the weeds without roots was as follows: 91 ounces, 88 ounces, 84 ounces, 86 ounces, and 60 ounces, making an average of 86 ounces per square yard. The first one is quite a little above the average. If that is left out the average will be 80 ounces to the square yard, or three and three-fourths pounds. This would make 14,520 pounds to the acre. A sample of weeds was dried and gave 31 per cent. dry weight, or 3,049 pounds of dry matter, one and one-half tons, or enough to reduce the yield of wheat 25 bushels, provided wheat could have made as good use of the moisture and plant food. One thing is certain, and that is that the growing of these weeds used up 2,100 tons of water, the equivalent of 18 inches of rainfall and that is rain that was actually in the soil where the wheat could have secured it. It is an expensive thing to have on the farm.

Feeding Sheep.

Silage may be fed to store sheep or to fatten sheep but is considered inferior to roots for ewes suckling early lambs. Where a large flow of milk is especially desirable, oats and bran and a little oil meal will make a satisfactory grain mixture.

RAISING INCUBATOR CHICKS.

An Oklahoma Farmer's Wife Gives Valuable Hints

I hear about so many people who have trouble starting incubator chicks and as I have had splendid success I thought I would tell about them.

I have a 150 egg capacity incubator. I started it Feb. 1st and hatched 161 chicks, which was nearly all of the fertile eggs. Set it again March 24 and hatched 106 which was all but 3 of the fertile eggs.

I use a fireless brooder which I make myself out of a box about 15 in. square and 8 in. deep. I cut a hole 3 in. by 3 in. one side at the bottom of the box. I drive nails into the sides about 2 or 3 in. from the top of the box and make a frame of laths to slip into the box. The nails prevent this frame from slipping down too far. I tack muslin onto the frame, pleated at the corners so it will sag down in the middle, then make 3 pads of muslin with cotton inside to fit inside the top of box and use one, two or three as the weather requires. I put fine litter in the box to a depth of one inch in the middle and deeper at the sides. I take the little chicks right out of the machine and put them in this brooder inside of a brooder coop 3x6 feet, with glass on the south to make it warm.

The first food I give them is dry bread crumbs rolled fine and moistened with sweet milk. I also give sweet milk, water and fine grit. I do not wait any certain length of time to feed them but as soon as they begin to come out of the brooder box into the brooder coop and begin to pick, I put in water, grit, and milk and a very little of the bread crumbs about every two hours for the first week.

At present I have between 175 and 180 fine chicks, one-half of which will be ready for the market in about three weeks, being now six weeks old.—Mrs. Wm. H. Jones.

Mer One Condition.

He—Would you be satisfied to give up your present beautiful home and live in a little white cottage?

She—I might, if there was a little, red automobile hitched in front of the door.—Montreal Star.

Very Strange.

"I've observed one strange thing," says the Philosopher of Polly, "and that is that the coming man is always one who has got there."

Use of Electricity.

The use of electricity for lighting and power in the home is now being discussed in the last eight years.